

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. - 19. (Cancelled)

20. (Currently Amended) A method for ~~facilitating decision making by~~ accessing or generating an argument supporting a conclusion for a given situation, the method ~~using a processor to perform steps~~ comprising:

using a processor to perform steps comprising:

presenting to a user a plurality of searchable templates, ~~wherein each of the plurality of searchable templates includes a plurality of queries, and wherein at least one~~ a subset of the plurality of searchable templates is relevant to the given situation;

receiving from said user a selection of one of said plurality of searchable templates from ~~among the at least one of the plurality of searchable templates~~ said subset that is relevant to the given situation, said one of said plurality of searchable templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation and including a plurality of queries;

displaying said plurality of queries to said user, wherein each of said plurality of queries has a categorical scale of likelihood regarding whether the given situation will likely have a negative or positive result, the categorical scale of likelihood being represented by a plurality of potential responses;

presenting to the user at least one discovery tool that links to an external data source to facilitate responding to at least one of the plurality of queries;

receiving from said user one or more user responses to ~~one or more said plurality of queries of the relevant template,~~ where each of said one or more user

~~responses is associated with~~ is selected from the plurality of potential responses
~~such that each of the user responses indicates~~ a likelihood of a negative or
 positive result for an associated one of the ~~one or more~~ plurality of queries and
~~wherein one or more of the one or more queries has an associated discovery tool~~
~~that links to an external data source to facilitate responding to the one or more of~~
~~the one or more queries;~~

receiving from said user supporting evidence in response to said ~~one or~~
~~more~~ plurality of queries, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to
 form at least one of the one or more user responses;

associating said supporting evidence received from said user with at least
 one of said ~~one or more~~ plurality of queries for which a user response has been
 received;

evaluating said one or more user responses, in accordance with the
 likelihood of a negative or positive result ~~associated with~~ indicated by each of
 said one or more user responses, ~~to determine~~ such that said one or more user
responses collectively support a conclusion indicating whether the given situation
 will likely have a positive or negative result;

forming an argument supporting the conclusion of the evaluating, the
 argument comprising the relevant template, the one or more user responses, the
 supporting evidence, and the conclusion; and

publishing said argument, including said relevant template, said one or
 more user responses, said supporting evidence, and said conclusion, for review.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 20, further comprising
 associating a rationale provided by said user to each of said ~~one or more~~ plurality of
 queries for which a response has been received.

23. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 20, wherein the plurality of

~~queries associated with each of the plurality of searchable templates~~ is formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent query that has a plurality of children queries is automatically responded to by responded to the children queries of the parent query.

24. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 20, wherein input to one or more of the ~~one or more~~ plurality of queries is received from a plurality of users over a computer network.

25. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 24, the method further comprising allowing one or more of the plurality of users to generate and associate comments to at least a portion of the new argument.

26. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users.

27. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 20, wherein each of the ~~one or more~~ plurality of queries is a multiple choice question.

28. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 27, wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the given situation have a positive or negative result.

29. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 28, wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of responses that partition the categorical scale of likelihood.

30. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 28, wherein each of the plurality of queries ~~associated with each of the plurality of searchable templates~~ is formed in a first hierarchical structure, the method further comprising automatically answering a parent query having a plurality of children queries based on responses to

the children queries of the parent.

31. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 30, the method further comprising receiving more than one response for at least one of the plurality of queries.

32. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the parent query is automatically responded to using a response technique selected by a user.

33. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 32, wherein the response technique is selected from a group comprising: a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique.

34. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 30, wherein each response within the first hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each of the plurality of colors representing a different response so that colors of the first hierarchical structure convey a line of reasoning.

35. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 30, wherein one or more of the plurality of queries is associated with a second hierarchical structure of queries and the first hierarchical structure and the second hierarchical structure together form a set of cascaded arguments.

36. (Cancelled)

37. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 20, wherein each of the plurality of searchable templates is associated with a situation descriptor, the method further comprising selecting one of the plurality of searchable templates which is most relevant to the given situation by comparing the given situation to situation descriptors associated with the plurality of searchable templates to thereby find most relevant ones of the plurality of searchable templates having situation descriptors that most closely

match the given situation.

38. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 20, the method further comprising creating a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert.

39. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium containing executable program instructions for ~~facilitating decision making by~~ accessing or generating an argument supporting a conclusion for a given situation, the ~~computer readable medium~~ instructions causing a processor to perform steps comprising:

~~computer code for~~ presenting to a user a plurality of searchable templates, ~~wherein each of the plurality of searchable templates includes a plurality of queries, and wherein at least one~~ a subset of the plurality of searchable templates is relevant to the given situation;

~~computer code for~~ receiving from said user a selection of one of said plurality of searchable templates from among the ~~at least one of the plurality of searchable templates~~ said subset that is relevant to the given situation, said one of said plurality of searchable templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation and comprising a plurality of queries;

displaying said plurality of queries to the user, wherein each of the plurality of queries has a categorical scale of likelihood regarding whether the given situation will likely have a negative or positive result, the categorical scale of likelihood being represented by a plurality of potential responses;

presenting to the user at least one discovery tool that links to an external data source to facilitate responding to at least one of the plurality of queries;

~~computer code for~~ receiving from said user one or more user responses to ~~one or more~~ plurality of queries of the relevant template, where each of said one or more user responses ~~is associated with~~ is selected from the plurality of potential responses such that each of the user responses indicates a likelihood of a negative or positive result for an associated one of the ~~one or more~~ plurality of queries ~~and wherein one or more of the one or more queries has an associated discovery tool that links to an external data~~

~~source to facilitate responding to the one or more of the one or more queries;~~

~~computer code for receiving from said user supporting evidence in response to said one or more plurality of queries, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the one or more user responses;~~

~~computer code for associating said supporting evidence received from said user with at least one of the one or more plurality of queries for which a user response has been received;~~

~~computer code for evaluating said one or more user responses, in accordance with the likelihood of a negative or positive result ~~associated with~~ indicated by each of said one or more user responses, ~~to determine~~ such that said one or more user responses collectively support a conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or negative result;~~

~~computer code for forming an argument supporting the conclusion of the evaluating, the argument comprising the relevant template, the one or more user responses, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion; and~~

~~computer code for publishing said argument, including said relevant template, said one or more user responses, said supporting evidence, and said conclusion, for review; and~~

~~a computer readable medium that stores the computer codes.~~

40. (Cancelled)

41. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 39, wherein the plurality of queries is formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent query that has a plurality of children queries is automatically responded to by responding to the children queries of the parent query.

42. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 39, wherein the argument server is further configured to associate a rationale with each of the user responses.

43. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 39, wherein input to one or more of the plurality of queries is received from a plurality of users over a computer network.

44. (New) The computer readable storage medium system as recited in claim 43, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow one or more of the plurality of users to generate and associate comments to at least a portion of the argument.

45. (New) The computer readable storage medium system as recited in claim 44, wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users.

46. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 39, wherein each of the plurality of queries is a multiple choice question.

47. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 46, wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the given situation have a positive or negative result.

48. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 47, wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of responses that partition the categorical scale of likelihood.

49. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 47, wherein the plurality of queries associated with each of the plurality templates are formed in a first hierarchical structure, wherein the argument server is further configured to automatically answer a parent query having a plurality of children queries based on responses to- children queries of the parent query.

50. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 49, wherein

the argument server is further configured to allow more than one response for each of the plurality of queries.

51. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 49, wherein the parent query is automatically answered using a response technique selected by a user.

52. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 51, wherein the response technique is selected from a group comprising: a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique.

53. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 49, wherein each response within the first hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each color of the subset of colors representing a different response so that colors of the first hierarchical structure convey a line of reasoning.

54. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 49, wherein one or more of the plurality of queries is associated with a second hierarchical structure of queries and the first hierarchical structure and the second hierarchical structure together form a set of cascaded arguments.

55. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 39, wherein each of the plurality of templates is associated with a situation descriptor and the argument server selects one of the plurality of templates which is most relevant to the given situation by comparing the given situation to situation descriptors associated with the plurality of templates to thereby find a most relevant one of the plurality of templates having a situation descriptor that most closely matches the given situation.

56. (New) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 39, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow creation of a template, wherein the

new template is created by an expert.